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NEMO'S ALMANAC 2015

a literary competition in its 124th year

Unhappy Fair! That in one luckless day—
From future Almanacks the day be crost!—
At once her Lover and her Lap-dog lost.

Edited by Nigel Forde
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NEMO'S ALMANAC 2015

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RULES

The quotations are to be identified by reference to author, work and, where appropriate, line number or number of chapter, act or scene. Ten marks are given for each answer with full references **including source**. Incomplete answers and guesses will receive marks on their merits. Extra marks will be given for answers found only by one or two competitors, also for exceptionally good answers, at the Editor's discretion.

2. The Prizes are book tokens of amounts dictated by the modest budget of the Almanac (this year these are £50, £40 and £30). No competitor may can take a first prize two years running, or any prize at all in the fourth year, after three years running.

3. Answers are to be typed or legibly written on one side of the paper only, leaving a margin for marks on the right hand side. Full name and address are to be written on the first page. The entry, should reach the editor not later than September 1st of the year on the cover.
Please mark your envelope "Nemo".

4. If a reasonably sized stamped addressed envelope is enclosed, entries will be returned with an answer sheet.

5. A pseudonym may be used, but prizewinners' names will be published.

6. No author is quoted more than once. No extract is in translation.

7. The editor's decision is final in every case.

January

1

There followed much raucous, suggestive toasting,
Norman was designated "a stripling kid,"
And ceremoniously nicknamed "Kit,"
And people started calling Shirley "Shirl,"
And "Curly-Shirl," and "Shirl-Girl."

2

Be kind and tender to the Frog,
  And do not call him names,
As 'Slimy skin, ' or 'Pollywog,'
  Or likewise 'Ugly James,'
Or 'Gape-a-grin' or 'Toad-gone-wrong'

3

Children suffer greatly from absurd nicknames. My mother thoughtlessly called me Iddy Toodles. I was called Iddy until I went to school, when I made my first stand for children's rights by insisting on being called at least Joe. At fifteen I refused to answer to anything shorter than Joseph.

4

Everyone in Class II at the Grammar School
had heard of Walter Bird, known as Wazo.
They said he'd behead each dullard and fool
or, instead, carve off a tail for the fun.

5

As pies and daws are often styled
With Christian nicknames like a child
As we say 'Monsieur' to an ape
Without offence to human shape:
So men have got from bird and brute
Names that would best their natures suit

6

Devolved from a youthful
fascination to an earthbound boredom,
he hates himself as much as the laboratory-
cum-classroom. He is proud of being completely bald,
Bunsen Brynner rubbed off the board with a pleasing
regularity.

February

1
as Eurydice and Orpheus
  As Leda and the Swan
  as Hero and Leander
So were Joan and John.

2
When Orpheus went down to the regions below,
  Which men are forbidden to see,
He tuned up his lyre, as out histories show,
  To set his Eurydice free.

3
Orpheus liked the glad personal quality
Of the things beneath the sky. Of course, Eurydice was a part
Of this. Then one day everything changed. He rends
Rocks into fissures with lament. Gullies, hummocks
Can't withstand it.

4
So bright is thy beauty, so charming thy song,
As had drawn both the beasts and their Orpheus along;
But such is thy avarice, and such is thy pride,
That the beasts must have starved, and the poet have died.

5
On the third day after her unexpected death,
Orpheus descended into Hell.
It wasn't hard to find. He knew the directions well;
asleep, he'd often read them by the light of his own breath.

6
Orpheus with his lute made trees
And the mountain-tops that freeze
Bend themselves; that's more than you
With your disgusting voice can do.

March

1
What though on me they pour their spite?
  I may not use the glozer's trade,
I cannot say the crow is white,
  But needs must call a spade a spade.

2
Spade! with which Wilkinson hath tilled his lands,
And shaped these pleasant walks by Emont's side,
Thou art a tool of honour in my hands

3
Laborious, therefore, be; but, lest the spade
(Which here doth labour mean) thou use in vain,
The serpent thereunto be sure thou add;
That is, let prudence guide thy taking pain.

4
And spider webs across half-open gates
And broken sickles buried under leaves,
And idle spades beside old garden walls

5
The *Gard'ner*, weary of his Trade
Tir'd of the Mattock, and the Spade,
Chang'd to *Apollos* in a Trice,
Waters the *Plants of Paradise*

6
Light without winde is glasse: warm without weight
Is wooll and furres: cool without closenesse, shade:
Speed without pains, a horse; tall without height
A servile hawk: low without losse, a spade.

April

1
And though the Seven Lights bowed in their dance and wept,
The Polar Dragon slept,
His heavy rings uncoiled from glimmering deep to deep

2
"Remember you'll have to do your proper share of the fighting,
dragon!" said St. George, as he took the hint and rose to go; "I mean
ramping, and breathing fire, and so on!
"I can ramp all right," replied the dragon, confidently; "as to
breathing fire, it's surprising how easily one gets out of practice;
but I'll do the best I can. Good-night!"

3
Torn was the otter from its house of water,
Birds from the sky, and from the stream the swan,
And still the dragon issued forth unvanquished,
And the great engines of its breath fumed on.

4
Happy the dragon
In the days expended
Before the time had come for dragons
To be hounded

5
but more
Than because of the lonely stumble
In the spiked bramble after
The wrecked dragon caught
In the five high singing wires
Its tail twisting the wind
Into visibility, I turn
To where is it you lodge

6
We looked at each other. Dragons
seemed unlikely in the grey drip but Dylan smelled dragons
so we slithered up the road and found a field where dragons
had rutted. It looked like scramblers but Dylan said dragons.
In any case the ruts were still there but not the dragons
so we ate our sandwiches while the guides talked dragons
and sheep burnings and farmsteads torched by dragons

May

1
Fuming along their provinces they go,
Fair Isle and Forties,
Dogger, Bight, Humber,
Thames, Dover, Portland,
Sole, Finisterre.

2
Between small-print of shore
and broad stroke of the littoral
is fulmar territory. Rockall to Fastnet,
Lundy to Hebrides.

3
And when I go down off Rockall or Malin
Or Dogger or Finisterre
The giant salt boon of your presence there
Will more than compensate
Me among the Nereids

4
Darkness outside. Inside, the radio's prayer —
Rockall. Malin. Dogger. Finisterre.

5
Dogger, Rockall, Malin, Irish Sea:
Green, swift upsurges, North Atlantic flux
Conjured by that strong gale-warning voice
Collapse into a sibilant penumbra.

6
North 5 or 6, winds variable.
Unlike the fleeces of Fastnet,
The underbelly loops of wool
Look colourful and comfortable,
Miles from the ships at sea tonight
In *Portland, Plymouth, Lundy, Sole.*

June

1
Olbers' riddle has hung around
for centuries.
You can't explain it by absorption.
Gas and dust heat up and glow.
Nor by absences or voids.
Every square inch has its galaxies.

2
These stars and planets have no names,
To name them is to lie,
I stare at this cold universe
So far from me so near to me.

3
'Some of the gas
formed a diffuse, spherical nebula,
a thin disk, that cooled and flattened.
Pulled one way by its own gravity,
the other way by the sun,
it broke, forming smaller clouds,
the protoplanets. Earth
was 2000 times as wide as it is now.'

4
The universe may or may not be very immense.
As a matter of fact there are times when I am apt
To feel it close in tight against my sense
Like a caul in which I was born and still am wrapped

5
What hand unseen
Impels me onward thro' the glowing orbs
Of habitable nature; far remote,
To the dread confines of eternal night,
To solitudes of vast unpeopled space,
The desarts of creation, wide and wild

6
What they are saying is
that there is life there, too:
that the universe is the size it is
to enable us to catch up.

July

1
But beware of th' intrusion of bold Sansculottes;
Who regardless of Charlotte's most elegant stitches,
May rudely sit down without linen or breeches:
Would you know from what quarter the mischief may come,
When the battery's unmasked then beware of the bomb.

2
But the thing that I saw in your face
No power can disinherit:
No bomb that ever burst
Shatters the crystal spirit.

3
The maimed young Colonel who can calculate
On two remaining fingers and a will,
Takes lessons from the past, to detonate
A bomb that Brutus rendered possible.

4
And charred faces stared at me with pity
and I saw the city burning about me
and the flash of guns on the dark smoke
and I heard bombs burst in the fire and in my heart,
but no one came to seek my son.

5
They were building the match factory
to serve moors seeded with conifers
that year of the Bay of Pigs,

the year of Cuba, when adults muttered
of taking to the moors with a shotgun
when the bomb dropped.

6
You are the gas-man, and the flier
Who drops his bomb; the man in tanks.
You wire mines and fear the fire.

August

1
He walked to and fro, and restored every piece of furniture
to its proper place, heaped the contents of the ash-trays into
one large ash-tray, covered some of the food, and locked up
the alcohol. He did this leisurely, while thinking of the
woman upstairs, and while eating two chocolates, —not
more, because he had notions about his stomach.

2
Here the seats are; George, old man,
Get some chocolates while you can.

Quick, the curtains going to rise
(Either Bradbury's or Spry's).

3
He never buys his wife chocolates
but brings her library books
chosen carefully, three-week gifts
she must learn not to love too much.

4
The slopping of the sea grew still one night
And a pale silver patterned on the deck

And made one think of porcelain chocolate
And pied umbrellas.

5
If some confectioner were willing
To let the shape announce the filling,
We'd encounter fewer assorted chocs,
Bitten into and returned to the box.

6
Today Tunde and I said we won't tell
anybody else what we tell each other.
It will all be secret. I gave him a chocolate.
He gave me a Monster Munch.
Tunde has the same thing to eat everyday.

September

1
My mother cursed me that I heard
  A young man's wooing as I spun.
Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,—
  For I have, since, a harder known!

2
Little mother, forgive me.
I wake you for answers in the night
Like any infant. Tell me about touch.
What necessities designed your hands and mine?

3
                Nay, a mother.
Why not a mother? When I said "a mother",
Methought you saw a serpent. What's in "mother"
That you started at it? I say I am your mother

4
But don't write a book about Mother!
  Don't write a book about Mum!
We all know Mumsy was vague and clumsy,
  Dithering, drunken and dumb.

5
Oh, mother, mother, did you ever dream,
You good, brave simple mother, you pure soul
No evil could come nigh, did you once dream
In all your dying cares for your lone girl
Left to fight out her fortune helplessly
That there would be *this* danger?

6
The little girl without a mother behaves like a mother
With her rag doll to whom she explains fear and anguish,
The meagreness of the bread ration, how to make it last,
How to get back to the doll's house

October

1
In dreams she moans, and fancied wrongs bewails,
When morning wakes, none earlier rous'd than she,
When pendent drops fall glitt'ring from the tree;
But nought her rayless melancholy cheers,
Or soothes her breast

2
In dream the desired came
To my lonely bed,
As 'twere to her own:
And called my name
And touched my head.

3
The women sleep.
We look for them in their dreams.

When we bump into a piece of the scenery,
It falls, waking them.

4
Tense through the night I stared with sleepless eye
While this fulfilment of my dream went by,
But had some mortal told me that I dreamed,
I should have answered that he but blasphemed.

5
Here, where last night she came,—even she, for whom
  I would so gladly live, or lie down dead,—
  Came in the likeness of a Dream, and said
Such words as thrilled this desolate ghost-thronged room

6
'I was having a conversation,' he said, 'with a person (or persons, because he changed his appearance so often) of great intelligence, and I can clearly remember the argument. Yet this is the first time I have ever been able to remember any argument that came to me in sleep. Usually my dreams are so different from waking that I can only describe them if I say: "It is as though I was living and thinking as a tree, or a bell, or middle C, or a five-pound note; as though I had never been human."'

November

1
Watch me closely. I take a stone from the right pocket of my greatcoat, suck it, stop sucking it, put it in the left pocket of my greatcoat, the one empty (of stones). I take a second stone from the right pocket of my greatcoat, suck it, put it in the left pocket of my greatcoat. And so on, until the right pocket of my greatcoat is empty

2
Make him turn his pockets out
And his seven harvests count.
Spread out the vain collection —
Not a ha'penny of affection.

3
too many gods
Have played the host to us and had their claim
Shrugged off. Old pockets, worn-out wallets keep
The bills and tickets. In a drawer, a heap
Of shells recalls a place, perhaps a name.

4
Around midnight an orderly rummages his pockets: £2.50 in change,
A latchkey, two chestnuts, one mitten, scraps of paper,
Some written on, but no wallet, cards, licence, or address book.

5
"Take your hands out of your pockets and don't stand there dreaming," had been Daddy's farewell words. Spoken in a distinctly impatient voice too, so that Tom, while he waved goodbye and watched the car receding down the drive, felt both surprised and annoyed. Yet these same words, when pronounced by Mother (as they usually were about fifty times a day) never annoyed him in the least.

6
I have only once in my life picked a pocket, and then (perhaps through some absent-mindedness) I picked my own. My act can really with some reason be so described. For in taking things out of my pocket I had at least one of the more tense and quivering emotions of the thief, I had a complete ignorance and a profound curiosity as to what I should find there.

December

1
"Ah, boys, that was a pious din,
That Quire was; a pious praise
The noise was that we used to raise,
I and my serpent, George with his'n,
On Easter day in 'He is risen,'
Or blessed Christmas in Venite."'

2
Sing then while he doth us inspire;
For all the World is our Pan's Quire

3
there will be dumbness in the choir tonight

when the voices are raised all together
black kites flying on what should be a holiday

There will be silence in the cathedral

4
Looking them over I've at times forgot
They've never been put on. I seem to spend
Too much time reading through a final shot
Where massed choirs sing, they kiss, and then THE END

5
But oh! what Art can teach
  What human voice can reach
The sacred ORGANS praise?
Notes inspiring holy Love,
Notes that wing their heav'nly ways
    To mend the Choires above.

6
The choir are getting into their sullied robes, in a hurry, when he arrives among them, gets on his own robe, and falls into the procession filing in to service. Then, the Sacristan locks the iron-barred gates that divide the sanctuary from the chancel, and all of the procession having settled into their places, hide their faces; and then the intoned words, 'WHEN THE WICKED MAN—'

Answers

JANUARY
1. Symmons Roberts: Messiaen in Gorlitz Last stanza
2. Vachel Lindsay: Bryan, Bryan, Bryan II.
3. Barker: Fourth Cycle of Love Poems VI i
4. Maxine Kumin: Address to the Angels
5. Belloc: The Birds
6. Wendell Holmes: The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table VIII

FEBRUARY
1. Turner: Giraffe and Tree
2. Larkin: After-Dinner Remarks III stanza 2
3. John Joy Bell: The Giraffe
4. Updike: The High Hearts stanza 2
5. Barnes: A History of the World in 10½ Chapters
6. Redgrove: The Case section 4

MARCH
1. Congreve: To the King on the Taking of Namure VI
2. Stafford: Men
3. Eberhart: At the End of War
4. Jarrell: A Lullaby
5. McGough: Icarus Allsorts
6. Ernest Rhys: London stanza 3

APRIL
1. Crichton Smith: Dead for a Rat
2. C. Day Lewis: Old Vic stanza
3. Hart Crane: The Tree
4. Porter: Exit, Pursued by a Bear
5. Blackburn: The Unabiding
6. Durrell: Cities, Plains and People III

MAY
1. Muriel Stuart: The Seed-Shop
2. R. Minhinnick: Grandfather in the Garden last stanza
3. Hardy: Domicilium
4. James R. Lowell: The Sower stanza 2
5. E. Davison: The Crop stanza 12
6. Tennyson: Amphion

JUNE
1. Patmore: Tamerton Church-Tower II ii
2. Nicholson: The Evacuees stanza 4
3. Sidney: Astrophel and Stella LXXXI 5-9
4. Brownjohn: Lucky Thirteen
5. Shipman: The Kiss 1656 To Mrs. C.
6. Reade: The Cloister and the Hearth Chap XLVI

JULY
1. John Wolcot: To a Fish of the Brooke
2. Basil Payne: Lines in Memory of my Father
3. Gwen Clear: Fish
4. Galway Kinnell: The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World II
5. Newbolt: April on Waggon Hill
6. Isherwood: On His Queerness

AUGUST
1. Peter Hewitt: Place of Birth
2. George MacDonald: The Shortest and Sweetest of Songs
3. Hamburger: Scenario
4. Hodgson: The Moor
5. Lachlan Mackinnon: Cairn
6. Lamb: Home Delights

SEPTEMBER
1. Hal Summers: O Dowland, Old John Dowland
2. Keith Bosley: In Memory of Benjamin Britten
3. S. Butler: The Way of All Flesh Chap. 86
4. Roy Fuller: Revised Version
5. Donaghy: Cadenza
6. Leigh Hunt: The Fancy Concert sect. 4

OCTOBER
1. John Mole: On the Set
2. Simic: Poem Without a Title
3. John Banville: Doctor Copernicus Chap 1
4. Ian Hamilton Finlay: Late Night Shipping Forecast
5. Auden: Adolescence
6. Causley: Ten Types of Hospital Visitor

NOVEMBER
1. Kingsley: Yeast chap. 1
2. Marston: Antonio's Revenge (opening)
3. J. Stanyan Bigg: An Irish Picture
4. Coleridge: The Destiny of Nations 363-370
5. James Thomson: The City of Dreadful Night IV
6. A. MacLeish: The End of the World

DECEMBER
1. Ted Walker: Ivy
2. Herrick: Ceremony upon Candlemas Eve
3. King Henry VIII: The Holly
4. Uttley: The Country Child - 'December'
5. Dickens: The Ivy Green
6. Young: After the Gale

COVER: P. J. Kavanagh: Sad Song

Marks and Prizes

1st Prize
720 Alison Sheehan-Hunt

2nd Prize
710 Elspeth Christie

3rd Prize
708 Brian Jordan

---

690 Eric Love

690 Susan Woodman and Phillip Hearsum

690 Caroline Heal

690 Ian Patterson

685 S.J. Bird

675 Jenny Naish

640 Gli Amici

520 Steven Osborn

515 W.A. Kyle

400 Kenneth Thornton

350 Michael and Carolyn Greet

385 Rosemary Johnson

330 Mary Milne-Day, Sara Price, Anne Willitts

270 Mrs. P.J.Pearce

180 Gillian Rigby

175 Tom Durham

170 Michael Webb-Ingall

170 Davie Dolan Jr.

144 The Mossfield Gang

140 Alan Langley

REMARKS

It is said, I believe, that many people on opening a newspaper turn first to the obituary section. I don't know if that is true, but I shall honour that predilection and honour straight away two great figures in the history of Nemo. Not a great deal of fuss was made in the world at the passing of the previous editor, Gerard Benson, and it is just possible that this is the first that some of you will have heard of it. It came to my ears only after several weeks. He was praised as a poet and an educator though nothing was mentioned about his work for Nemo. We, of course, know differently. He was a charming, witty and erudite man and posed us some fairly frightening questions and problems in this almanac; quite a few with a clever subtext which was both a clue and a further hindrance. Gerard and I met only a couple of times but every meeting was memorable and one went away from it feeling almost as witty and erudite as he was. One can say that about very few people. If we have never said it before, now is the time to say 'thank you, Gerard.'

Many of you will also remember the formidable duo of Professor and Mrs. Hodgart. They both appeared a remarkable number of times at the top of the list of marks and were extremely hard to beat. For a long time they were the undisputed stars of Nemo. When I did a programme on 'Bookshelf' about Nemo I went down to Brighton and interviewed them, expecting perhaps the Professor to be the real brains behind their myriad successes, but discovered to my delight a very equal partnership. Pat Hodgart, after her husband's death, continued to contribute to Nemo right to the end despite ill-health. She also, with characteristic kindness, left a bequest to Nemo in her will. This was a surprise and far beyond the call of duty; a lovely gesture which I hope can keep the almanac going for a little longer, though how long I don't know. As you will see, the number of people who send in answers is much diminished this year. Many familiar names are absent. Yes, I admit it is difficult; partly because that is Nemo's stock in trade, partly because one needs to avoid, if at all possible, the answers readily available on the internet. We are all ageing (I discovered recently that one of our regular entrants is 100...) and the diminishing number of libraries and the diminishing number of books in those libraries makes things very much more difficult than it was ten years ago. And yet...there are still entries only a few marks away from the maximum. So even though it is difficult it is still possible.

And I must say that as well as being industrious and intelligent, you are a very kind bunch of people: so many send more money than is strictly necessary for the copies you order, and that is very much appreciated. You also write delightful letters which I steadfastly refuse to answer. But life gets in the way: forgive me – I would if I could.

No amazingly funny answers this year. Something of a disappointment: I do love it (and don't subtract marks) when there are typos in your submissions. Not that I am asking you to be more careless. But one thing exercised me (briefly): there were more than a couple of wrong answers to the Alison Uttley piece. All were the same and suggested someone of whom I had never heard and who sounded American: Julie Hogan 'A Hometown Christmas'. I wonder if she was doing a bit of sly plagiarism. I shall search out the author and try to find out.

Now here's the next instalment, looked forward to by many if the letters are to be believed. I think some of it may be a bit easier than of late, but what do I know? What I do know is that I am beginning to get a bit weary of the editorship and seem to remember I had more fun in the chase than I have had in the compilation. More of this later. Ladies and gentlemen, to your books!

Notices

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